

Message Text

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ACTION ORM-02

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TAGS: SREF, UNHCR,

SUBJ: UNHCR VISIT TO VIETNAM

REF: (A) STATE 001656, (B) GENEVA 0077

1. UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES SADRUDDIN AGA KHAN
CALLED AT HIS INITIATIVE THIS MORNING TO PROVIDE
DETAILS OF HIS DECEMBER VISIT TO VIETNAM.

2. SADRUDDIN STATED THAT HE HAD BEEN WELL RECEIVED BY HIGH
VIETNAMESE OFFICIALS IN BOTH HANOI AND SAIGON, THE LATTER
INCLUDING MORE THAN AN HOUR'S MEETING WITH PRG CHAIRMAN
THAT. NOTING THE ALMOST CONCURRENT VISIT OF WHO DIRECTOR-
GENERAL MAHLER, SADRUDDIN SAID IT WAS EVIDENT THAT THE
SOUTH VIETNAMESE, WHO HAD ORIGINALLY INVITED HIM FOR
EARLY DECEMBER, WISHED THAT THE HCR BE THE FIRST UN OFFICIAL
TO TRAVEL TO SAIGON. HE SAID THAT THERE WAS A CONCERTED
EFFORT ON THE PART OF THE PRG TO DISPERSE THE POPULATION
OF SAIGON, WHICH HAD INCREASED FROM ONE MILLION TO THREE
MILLION BY THE END OF THE WAR, TO RELOCATION POINTS
IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. SADRUDDIN INDICATED THAT
EVENTUALLY UNHCR, CURRENTLY EMBARKED ON A \$7 MILLION
RELIEF PROGRAM IN SOUTH VIETNAM, MIGHT BE INVOLVED
IN SOME WAY IN THIS EFFORT.

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3. SADRUDDIN STATED THAT HE RAISED THE SUBJECT OF REPATRIATION WITH THE PRG, WHO RESPONDED THAT THE TIME HAD NOT YET COME TO TAKE UP THIS MATTER. HE SAID IT WAS CLEAR THAT INTERNAL PROBLEMS AND SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS UNDERLAY SOUTH VIETNAMESE RELUCTANCE TO CONSIDER REPATRIATION AT THIS TIME. HE ADDED THAT THE PRG WAS OBVIOUSLY APPREHENSIVE OVER THE EFFECTS OF THE PASSAGE THROUGH GUAM OF THOSE WHO HAD FLED THE COUNTRY, AND OF THEIR INFLUENCE UPON THEIR COUNTRYMEN AFTER REPATRIATION AND DURING THE PRESENT DELICATE ADJUSTMENT PROCESS. THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE AUTHORITIES TOLD HIM TO COUNSEL THE WOULD-BE REPATRIATES EVERYWHERE TO BE PATIENT, NOT TO PRESS THE ISSUE AT THIS TIME, AND TO ADVISE THEM THEY WERE PROBABLY BETTER OFF NOW WHERE THEY WERE AS TO FOOD AND EMPLOYMENT THAN THEY WOULD BE IN VIETNAM. ASKED IF ANY INDICATION WERE GIVEN AS TO WHEN THE PRG MIGHT CONSIDER REPATRIATION, SADRUDDIN REPLIED THAT THEY SET NO TIME. HE SAID THAT HE RESPONDED TO THIS POSITION WITH A NOTE OF REGRET AND OBSERVED THAT IN HIS POSITION HE WOULD CONTINUE TO MAKE INQUIRIES ON THE SUBJECT. HE STATED THAT HE HAD MADE A PLEA TO THE PRG TO CONSIDER RECEIVING AT LEAST THOSE CASES WHICH COULD NOT BE CONSTRUED AS DANGEROUS TO STATE SECURITY, AND WHO SOUGHT ONLY TO REJOIN OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS, NOTABLY WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

4. WITH REFERENCE TO THOSE WHO HAD RETURNED ON THE VIET-NAM THUONG TIN, SADRUDDIN SAID THAT HE HAD MADE INQUIRIES ON THIS SUBJECT, SINCE HE HAD EARLIER BEEN INVOLVED IN THEIR RECEPTION, AND WAS PROVIDED NO SPECIFIC DETAILS AS TO THEIR SITUATION DIRECTLY. HOWEVER, HE WAS INFORMED INDIRECTLY THAT THE GROUP WAS STILL DETAINED IN A CAMP OUTSIDE SAIGON NEAR THE SEA, WHERE, HE PRESUMED, THEY WERE BEING INDOCTRINATED, PARTICIPATING IN SEMINARS, AND SO FORTH.

5. SADRUDDIN OBSERVED THAT THE ATMOSPHERE IN SAIGON LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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REMAINED MUCH THE SAME AS HE HAD SEEN IT BEFORE, WITH CONSIDERABLE BUSTLE AND ACTIVITY, PEOPLE RELAXING IN CAFES, AND BUSINESS BEING CONDUCTED MUCH AS USUAL. BY CONTRAST, HE OBSERVED, LIFE IN HANOI WAS STERN AND "SPARTAN", WITH NONE OF SAIGON'S COMFORTS, LARGE BUILDINGS AND LUXURIES SUCH AS AIR CONDITIONING. THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE THAT HE SAW OF OPPRESSIVE MEASURES OR HARSH MILITARY RULE. HE

NOTED A CONSIDERABLE EFFORT BEING DEPLOYED BY THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT TO REBUILD LIFE AND COMMUNITIES IN THE "IRON TRIANGLE", FORMERLY OCCUPIED BY THE U.S. 25TH DIVISION BETWEEN SAIGON AND THE PARROTS BEAK, AS WELL AS OTHER AREAS THAT HAD BEEN BADLY DAMAGED DURING THE WAR.

6. HE SAID IT WAS CLEAR THAT THE GOVERNMENT IN HANOI WAS ASSERTING, AT A MEASURED PACE "IN THE STYLE OF THE VIETNAMESE", ITS AUTHORITY OVER THE PRG, BEING SOLICITOUS NOT TO MOVE TOO ABRUPTLY. HE REPORTED THAT LEADING FIGURES IN BOTH THE PRG AND HANOI GOVERNMENTS WERE A "MOSAIC" FROM THE TWO AREAS.

7. THE PRG HAD APPROACHED HIM DURING THIS VISIT, SADRUDDIN SAID, TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE UNHCR MIGHT BE HELPFUL IN MOVING SOME FOREIGNERS FROM SAIGON, SPECIFICALLY TAIWANESE AND YEMENI (AS DEPT. AWARE, ICRC IS ALREADY ENGAGED IN THIS PROJECT).

8. IN CONNECTION WITH HIS INTERVENTIONS ON BEHALF OF CODEL MONTGOMERY AND THE TWO MARINE BODIES, SADRUDDIN NOTED THAT THE LAOTIAN AUTHORITIES, AS BUDDHISTS, WERE MORE UNDERSTANDING IN THEIR CONCERN OVER LOST PERSONNEL AND REPORTEDLY WERE DISPOSED TO ASSIST ACTIVELY IN FINDING AND IDENTIFYING AMERICAN REMAINS, CONCURRENT WITH SEARCHES FOR LAOTIANS KILLED IN COMBAT.DALE

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